

**Birch Stream Watershed
Stakeholder Introductory Meeting
Notes from March 5, 2009
5:30 p.m.**

Location: University College of Bangor, College Center Building, 201 Texas Avenue, Bangor, Maine.

INTRODUCTIONS

Welcome was made by the City Environmental Coordinator, Wendy Warren. All other City staff and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) staff also introduced themselves. City staff attendees included: Jim Ring, Norm Heitmann, Dan Wellington, Paul Nicklas, John Murphy, Wendy Warren, Ed Barrett, Mark Ward, Rebecca Hupp, Rodney Madden, Amanda Plourde, and City Councilors Dr. Geoff Gratwick, and Gerry Palmer. State DEP biologist, Jeff Dennis was also present. Stakeholders included 25 residents and business owners/operators from the community, as well as other interested parties.

PRESENTATIONS

The City Assistant Solicitor, Paul Nicklas, briefly introduced a useful guide document for Effective Public Comments. He noted that individuals should come prepared with as much background information as possible, that comments should be accompanied by envisioned solutions. He also noted that all comments put forth become part of the public record. Paul noted that comments are most effective if commenter stays focused, avoids repetition, and remains respectful of others. He also noted that the full text of this guidance is on the City's website located on the Stormwater page.

The City Environmental Coordinator, Wendy Warren, provided definitions of non-point source stormwater pollution, and described the need for a Stormwater Management Plan. Chet Bigelow of Sewall Company who has been hired as the project manager to develop the Watershed Management Plan described the highlights of the water quality analysis. Chet highlighted dissolved oxygen, temperature, soil erosion, propylene glycol, and other nutrients as all contributing to the circumstances that limit aquatic life in the Birch Stream. Andrew Johnston of SMRT, Inc. reviewed his companies findings that described recommended retrofits of existing stormwater systems near the airport and how best to enhance them for optimal stormwater treatment.

All of the aforementioned presentations are available on the City's website at www.bangormaine.gov/cs_birchstream.php.

QUESTIONS & COMMENTS

Members of the audience asked the following questions:

1) What is biggest cause of pollution in the stream?

Replies by both Chet Bigelow (Sewall Co.) and Andrew Johnston (SMRT, Inc.) were that no one cause is the biggest because the pollution is not from one single source, and the multitude of conditions caused by stormwater runoff all works together to create a complex array of problems. For instance, propylene glycol is not toxic by itself, but does use up oxygen as it decomposes. Increased nutrients, such as phosphorus, and raised temperatures, and the time of day also can result in a reduced amount of dissolved oxygen in the water.

2) Why doesn't the airport consider collecting and recycling it's propylene glycol (as auto mechanics do in their shops), rather than sending it to the Waste Water Treatment Plant after it is collected?

Rodney Madden, Environmental Officer for Bangor International Airport, replied that they have looked into recycling, but the logistics of trucking that volume of propylene glycol plus a large amount of water in order to recycle the propylene glycol is cost prohibitive since it must be shipped to Massachusetts via tanker trucks.

3) Why did the City allow multiple new multi-unit housing units to be developed in the watershed knowing that the stream is already in trouble, and that the main cause is from developed areas?

Wendy Warren replied that new developments are required to install state of the art technologies for stormwater control, and pays an extra fee into a stormwater infrastructure fund for any residual discharge that may occur as a result of the development. The City does not believe that stopping development would help the situation, since new development brings with it income for assisting with the installation of improvements in areas of old development.

4) There are monitoring wells around the airport in the rear where materials and chemicals were known to be disposed of. Are those monitoring wells being monitored, and is anything being done with regard to the potential underground contamination that may have occurred decades ago when the airport was Dow AFB?

Rodney Madden replied that the Army Corp of Engineers is in charge of an investigation of that area and that consultant has been studying the area to determine if there are any existing sources of contamination or underground contamination that needs to be addressed. They have found that the existing monitoring wells were no longer useable, so some new wells were installed. The sampling results from these wells have not yet come back. As soon as the results are completed, a report will be filed by the consultant to the Army Corp of Engineers, and the Bangor International Airport.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Wendy Warren introduced William Ball, from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Service who is currently an intern working on a project in the Birch Stream.

William described his project as one that identifies potential sources of pollution on facility landscapes and develops management plans to mitigate or eliminate the contaminants. William stated that he is looking for volunteers to invite him to their facilities to make recommendations for stormwater improvement based upon good landscaping principles.

Jeff Dennis, of Maine DEP stated that this problem is not something that the City can resolve on its own, but will require many efforts by many people to achieve the results necessary so that further restrictions are not necessary to bring upon individual facilities in the watershed. He also noted that funding would be a critical part of the plan, that without funding, the plan could not be implemented. He suggested that a Stormwater Utility District may be necessary to offset the costs of many of the new management practices and systems that will need to be implemented.

John Murphy, City Assistant Engineer, also offered some parting comments with regard to the adaptive management approach being taken by the City to address water quality improvements. He noted that adaptive management is more cost effective and logical in practice since it requires regular re-assessment of progress in order to re-establish priorities if, or when, necessary.

Ed Barrett, City Manager, invited everybody to continue to be part of the planning process and to keep informed along the way, noting that we don't want to come up with a plan that people do not support.